WEST ADAMS STREET, CHICAGO RIVER BRIDGE
(Chicago River Bascule Bridge, West Adams Street)
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-51

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS

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Location:	I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor West Adams Street crossing the Chicago River (South Branch) Chicago, Cook County, Illinois UTM: 16 E.447050 N.4636360 Quad: Chicago Loop
Date of Construction:	1926
Builder:	Substructure, Fitzsimons & Connell Dredge and Dock Company Superstructure, Strobel Steel Construction Company
Present Owner:	City of Chicago
Present Use:	Bridge
Significance:	The development of the Chicago trunnion bascule bridge occurred during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Despite the controversy over patent infringement -- Joseph E. Strauss charged the City of Chicago engineers with infringing on his patented Strauss-Trunion bascule bridge -- the Chicago bascule received great acclaim within the civil engineering profession. The design of the Adams Street Bridge was specifically modified to accommodate the congestion of the area.
Project Information:	The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.
Historians:	Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986.

The substructure of the Adams Street Bridge was constructed by the Fitzsimons & Connell Dredge and Dock Company; the superstructure was constructed by the Strobel Steel Construction Company. The Chicago trunnion bascule bridge was developed to accommodate the heavy demands of both land and water traffic. However, because of the congestion at Adams Street, a different design for the bridge's lifting machinery was required. The machinery on the east side of the bridge bears directly on the masonry with the outermost trunnions resting on steel columns, and the inner trunnions resting on steel S-girders. On the west side of the bridge, however, the outermost trunnions support the machinery and rest on longitudinal girders spanning from the front to the rear of the piers. The inner trunnions rest on S-girders. The presence of a railroad track on the west side of the bridge prevented any great extension of machinery; thus, the arm is quite short, needing only a shallow pit. The volume of the counterweight box has been reduced below the most desirable dimensions.

The Adams Street Bridge is a single-deck, double-leaf, trunnion bascule bridge. The bridge measures 199'-0" from center to the center of the trunnions and has a clear span of 173'-0". The superstructure is a steel deck truss with riveted gusset-plate connections. Width measures 64'-0" and has four lanes for vehicular traffic and two sidewalks. The guard rails contain decorative ironwork. The rusticated concrete abutments contain several small, glass, block windows. The bridge tender's houses, one on each side of the lift span, are designed in the Beaux-Arts style. The houses are identical in design and feature a lightly scored concrete veneer with chamfered corners and ornamental pilasters, a sopraporta (overdoor) with a decorative arch, numerous multi-light windows along the facade of the pylons, and large, one-over-one-light, double-hung, sash windows below a mansard-like tin roof with a raised diamond pattern.

SOURCES:

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Chicago Department of Public Works, Chicago Public Works: A History (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973).

"The Chicago Type of Bascule Bridge," Engineering Record, v. 42 (July 21, 1900): 50-52.

"The Lift of Bascule Type Movable Bridges," Engineering Record, v. 42 (July 28, 1900): 73.